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WHAT IS FREEDOM?

AND

WHEN AM I FREE?

BEING AN ATTEMPT TO PUT LIBERTY ON A RATIONAL BASIS,

AND WREST ITS KEEPING FROM IRRESPONSIBLE PRETENDERS IN CHURCH AND STATE.

BY

HENRY APPLETON,
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WHAT IS FREEDOM?

SOCRATES is said to have replied to a friend who congratulated him on his wisdom: "I am wiser than other men because I know that I know nothing: other men do not know this." We do not know what freedom is, because we have never experienced it. Max Müller, who has handled dictionaries more diligently, perhaps, than any other man living, depreciates the English habit of being satisfied with mere definitions, contrasting it with the more profound mental training of Germany. If we should consult Webster or Blackstone or Mill or Hegel for a definition in words, it would only be shifting the question without answering it. A definition, which is simply an equation in words, can only be perfect when it contains every effectuating factor of the problem. We once heard a school-boy at an examination define a potato as an esculent plant; but both he and the pretty school-mistress were thoroughly demoralized when a "stupid old German" on the committee wanted to know what an esculent plant was. The poor equation, when hard pushed, had no alternative but to roll over and expire on the pert lips of its mistress: "Why! an esculent plant is a potato, of course!" Plato fixed his place as "the school-master of the ages" through his matchless dexterity in overthrowing such opinions of his pupils as they paraded about, snugly bound in high-sounding phrases. The insolent and conceited Alcibiades comes into the presence of Socrates, prepared, with brazen self-assurance, to define goodness, justice, and virtue, only to discover, in his galling discomfiture, that he knows nothing about these subjects, — does not even know his own opinions.

Some philosopher had the curiosity to approach a wretched Lazzarone in Naples, and ask: "What is your idea of freedom?" "What is freedom, sir! Freedom is free macaroni," was the ready response. Everywhere we find the search after freedom obscured by some prospective object to be gained. Tell women they are prostituted slaves, robbed of their individuality, right of suffrage, scope for development, etc., and if they happen to be sumptuously kept, most of them reply: "I have all the freedom I

want." They are virtually on the same plane as the Lazzarone. Freedom with such ladies generally means elegant wardrobes, fine mansions, and admission into gilt-edged society. But the analysis of freedom as a *condition*, induced through the analogies of Nature, is an abstraction, having little temptation for the average mind. Yet freedom, or its synonyme, liberty, has ever been the theme of poets, the watchword of patriots, and the hope of every people.

Did it ever occur to the reader why the ordinary similes which we use to express a condition of freedom are gathered from fluids? We say: "His money is as free as water;" "I feel as free as the mountain air;" "the free meanderings of the woodland stream." Yet science teaches us that the air is just as severely bound by natural law as is the iron buried under a mountain. There is no absolute freedom in Nature. It would seem that whatever is associated with motion and spontaneity is always suggestive of it. Fluids are flexible. Their particles are so feebly attracted that they are easily affected by external forces. They seek their own level, and will find it, if not interfered with. Some mountain stream, rolling down the Sierras, will inspire a poet or patriot with the genius of liberty; but, as soon as you interpose the miller's dam, he turns away.

Certain chemical elements, we are told, have an affinity for each other. If another element be brought in contact with those already united, and one of the elements have a greater affinity for it than for the one with which it is already united, it will combine with the new element, and its old affinity is "*set free.*" Not imprisoned for adultery; not expelled from the Creator's laboratory; not banished from the best chemical families, — but *set free* to go whither it will, and unite in accordance with its highest law. When, therefore, we say "free as the elements," we say something more beautiful than we realize. The elements, left to the operation of their own laws, work out their highest destiny. Whether it be natural selection, chemical affinity, equilibrium, or any other term of science, no matter where we turn in the book of Nature, the lesson will always point to the great trinity of her economy, — motion, spontaneity, growth.

Things seem to be freest in Nature when no artificial arrangement is interposed to prevent their association in the manner most conducive to their growth and most in harmony with the conditions of their being. If this be so, it will apply to man and to society. Man is the cosmos in miniature. Society has been his greatest curse in one respect. It has coaxed him into selling his individuality, and burying it in collectivity. As soon as a man is prompted to follow some wholesome law of growth, his neighbor stands ready with the warning: "But you must not forget that you are a member of society; you do not own your-

self; society owns you." This is the most fatal heresy that ever seduced the race. Human progress never will begin in earnest till every man is taught to feel his own divinity. The Almighty never was known to sacrifice the most insignificant law of Nature, even in the interest of the whole universe. The universe is made up of a series of organisms, and the evident plan of its economy is that each shall fulfil its destiny in accordance with its conditions. Every man and woman is a distinct organism. His or her duty is to study the conditions and elements best fitted for the development of its best possibilities. Such forces and elements will naturally gravitate to it, just as material substances naturally associate for their most perfect development. Despotism begins when artificial and conventional interposition usurps the place of Nature, — when one organism assumes to provide for the wants of another, and dictate conditions for it.

When we conform to the conditions of our physical organism, we are blessed with what we call health. We feel freest when we feel healthiest. Did you ever seem freer than when you had just finished a morning sea-bath? When you breathe the vitalizing air of the ocean, and the blood courses nimbly through your veins, how naturally do you exclaim: "I feel as light and free as a bird!" On the other hand, when do you feel so much like a slave as when you sit in the solitude of an ill-ventilated room, a victim to the poisonous drugs of your doctor? An artificial invasion upon the methods of Nature in restoring your bodily functions is an invasion on your physiological freedom. If you are spiritually ill, you go to the glens or mountains, or to the sea-shore. The carol of the birds; the tinkling of the mountain rills; the great bosom of old ocean, — divert and neutralize the bitter currents of your soul. You finally say: "I have freed my spirit of its bitterness; now I feel freer to go among my friends again." But suppose, on the other hand, that through a false early education, or through fear of hell or of the devil, you go within the dismal walls of some Calvinistic church. A spiritual quack doctor, in sombre garb, with a voice as from the tomb, solemnly opens a ponderous book, and tells you "there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." While presenting the "gospel of light," this theological ghoul systematically dams up every channel of freshness and cheer in your nature. What has he really done? He has invaded your soul's freedom. He has drugged your natural organs of spiritual recuperation. Because he has seduced you into his gospel shop through your own want of enlightenment, he is none the less a tyrant over you. He has prevented you from being free, — that is, from working out your salvation in the manner which Nature has provided and adapted especially to you.

A state of freedom, then, would seem to be a state of health,

— a condition of normal functional activity, either in the individual or in society. As the air you breathe, composed of oxygen, nitrogen, and carbonic acid gas, is free and elastic through the impossibility of its being imprisoned and dammed up by the innovations of men, so your soul, composed of conscience, reason, and love, would also be free, were it not unfortunately in the power of your fellows to interpose arbitrary barriers to the consummation of its natural destiny. Why is the mountain air wholesome and vivifying? Because it is free. Why is the ocean invigorating and vitalizing? Because it is free. Why is the air of your cities pestilential and impairing? Because it is poisoned by commercial greed, and confined by the avarice of rent-hounds. Why does the mill-stream dispense noxious vapors? Because the spoliator of laborers behind the mill-wheel can meddle with its free meanderings.

Supposing you to be an intelligent man or woman, who had watched and studied your own physical organization, and felt yourself to be in a condition of perfect bodily freedom (health), how would you feel if you were impertinently accosted on some beautiful Spring morning by a self-constituted functionary, who should say: —

"My dear sir, you seem to be feeling pretty well, but I tell you, you are sick; now I am called, or elected, to be your doctor; you must take my medicines, which the law directs me to administer. You, in your conceit, think you are healthy; but you, as an individual, are of no account. You belong to society, which, by the sacred authority of the ballot-box, has made me your physical adviser. You, in common with your fellow-republicans, have taxed yourself to support me in my healing office; and now, I, in obedience to my oath, am called upon to offer you a dose of government pills, which, as you see, are duly stamped with the seal of this great and free commonwealth. If you take them like a loyal, law-abiding citizen, it shall be well with you; but if you refuse, my brother doctors of the judiciary, whom you have also elected, will feel themselves obliged to administer the more salutary dose of penitentiary tea, which I can assure you will not fail to bring you to terms"?

Would you not retort, in fierce indignation: —

"But who made *you*, audacious intruder, the judge of my health? Do I not know when my bodily functions work freely? Away with you and your pills! I can take care of myself"?

Yet, my friend, you are already committed. Your State or Congressional doctor has only to reply: —

"Was it not *you*, sir, whom I saw wire-pulling at the primary convention? Was it not *you*, sir, whom I heard howling to an excited rabble on the eve of election about the sacred right of suffrage? Well do I recollect how, amid thunders of bellowing

applause, you finished your speech with these last words, making night hideous with your noise: — '*Unless the doctor and his party are elected, the country is lost!*' "

I submit that this is a fair sketch of the general nature of government. With immense expense of money and patriotism we elect governments to tell us when we are sick. Government is predicated on the assumption that we are all sick, just as popular theology is predicated on the assumption that we are all by nature helpless and depraved. Like some coquettish female who loves to be sick occasionally that she may allure the caresses of her lover, or be fondled by a handsome young physician, we sovereign republicans delight in being sick from the immense satisfaction we have in being doctored. How thoroughly we are doctored is evident in the startling reports of national, state, and municipal indebtedness which come to us, and in the shameless prostitution of justice which is everywhere thrust before our eyes.

The case is the same in theology. Presumptuous doctors of divinity insist upon it that your soul is sick. In vain do you protest that your soul is feeling tolerably well; you try to be upright, honest, and conscientious in your dealings with your fellow-men; you strive to be generous and charitable, and live up to your highest convictions of right. But nothing will do. These ill-mannered intruders are determined to tear your soul from your own keeping. They still insist upon it that you are *sick*, and *must* be doctored, or refuse at your eternal peril. Yet, proud voter, when you call them to account, your case is compromised at the outset. They may reply: —

"Do you not boast of your sacred prerogative of taking part, and having a sovereign voice, in the election of the executives of a government which taxes you to support me and my church? Do you not make our office remunerative and eminently respectable by holding it fanatical and treasonable for your neighbor to refuse to be taxed for the support of sectarian schools, into which the bible of a caste religion is thrust, and which are controlled by our caste clergy? Why do you complain of religious and legislative doctors, when the very basis of your free government is founded on the theory that all men are born socially and morally sick? If you do not wish to be put on the sick-list against your will, then be consistent, and unmake or remodel the whole swindle. The fault is yours, not ours."

It is a poor compliment to republican logic that a man in private life will often repel an inroad upon his personal liberty with indignation, while he fosters and loves with patriotic devotion a government which does the same thing with impunity. Waiting in a barber's shop some time ago, I listened to a very suggestive

dialogue between a Judge of one of our higher courts in Rhode Island, and a Baptist deacon. It was in this wise:—

Deacon. "Judge, I did not see you yesterday at our church. We had an excellent sermon by the Rev. Dr. R."

Judge. "No, Deacon, I was somewhat overworked last week, and so I went on the Sunday excursion to get a little snuff of the sea-breeze."

Deacon. "Judge, I am very sorry to see a man holding your position give countenance to advertised Sabbath-breaking by his presence."

Judge. "Oh, well, Deacon, I don't think these Sunday steamboat excursions do any harm. You know thousands of operatives, shut up in mills, have no time but Sundays to get a little air and sunlight. There was no liquor allowed on board, and every thing was quiet and orderly. I rather think some of those poor fellows were as well off as if they had been crowded into an ill-ventilated church. As for myself, I don't recollect of sinning any."

Deacon. "But, Judge, you know we are commanded to keep the Sabbath as a day of rest, if nothing more."

Judge. "Well, Deacon, it may rest *you* on a hot day to sit and listen to a dry, long-winded sermon, but for me it would be the hardest work you could put me to."

Deacon. "Judge, I am shocked to hear a man of your standing talk so slightingly of the concerns of your soul."

Judge (a little piqued). "Deacon, you and I would never get anywhere arguing these points. What I want to know is: Who are *you* that you should presume to decide for me what is rest and what is labor, either on Sunday or any other day?"

And so this little duel of words ended. The Judge had evidently struck at the root of the matter with one blow. Yet, if on that very day the steamboat company on whose boat he sailed had been indicted for Sabbath-breaking, he would have been bound by the laws of Rhode Island to convict it on the very grounds for which he called the deacon to account. If the deacon has no right to decide what is rest and what is labor for his neighbor on the Sabbath, who are *you*, Your Honor, I ask, that you should do that very thing on a bench, dedicated to justice itself, in the name of the State? Do the eternal principles of right and wrong become inverted to suit your case, simply because you are backed by prisons and police and a posse of political scoundrels? Verily, the average American is sick when he speaks with feelings akin to reverence of the terrors and sanctity of the law, and yet would be tempted to rudely upbraid his own mother for the kind of interference with his personal liberty which a drunken New York judge can practise with impunity.

So, then, perhaps we ought not to be too severe on the doc-

tors. They are but the creatures of a society which is determined to be sick. A young medical assistant told me that he once received a terrible reprimand from his superior. He had been called suddenly to the bedside of a lackadaisical female to find that nothing was the matter with her but a natural scarcity of brains. On returning to the office he told the senior *medicus* that he had repaired to the lady's side in great haste only to find that she was well enough, — had told her so, and come away. "What!" said the doctor in great anger, as he opened a large book to debit a three-dollar fee; "at that rate you will soon kill off the cream of my practice. Never do that again!" In the days of Athens and Sparta it used to be a disgrace to be sick. Even the untutored savage of the American forest felt degraded to the core when he could no longer bear the tomahawk and the bow. Frederick the Great refused to submit to the humiliation of dying on a sick bed, and expired sitting erect in an iron chair with his faithful dogs beside him. One of Napoleon's officers refused to dismount from his horse when his leg was shot off above the knee; and the surgeons amputated the limb, while he sat in the saddle so quietly as not to start his faithful steed. But the age of physical hardihood has given way to that of moral hardihood. As Mr. Taine has it: "Those great moral giants of Cromwell's time have gone, never to return." It is now a proud mark of honor and wisdom to be politically, religiously, and socially sick, that we may boast of a royal pageant of priests, presidents, legal hierarchs, and Grundies. Nor are these functionaries necessary to restrain the ignorant and uncultivated alone. They are fed and flattered and kept for the benefit of the wise and *élite*. I think it was in a number of the old "Penny Magazine" that I read the following amusing anecdote. An audacious quack had come to London, and by dint of loud advertising and lying had stirred up an immense *furore* among the lame, the halt, and the blind of the metropolis. So great and persistent was the rush to his office, night and day, that the income of the most eminent professionals began to be affected by it. Finally the King's physician, as spokesman for the others, addressed a letter to the "London Times," denouncing the shameless intruder in the most scathing terms, and ended by saying that he was a most outrageous quack, and that "none but knaves and fools would patronize him in the future." The next morning the royal physician was surprised to find a most courteous reply to his fierce philippic. It thanked him most heartily for his gracious condescension in greeting a new brother with so eminent a notice through the public press; and after the cleverest manipulation of the adversary's insult, it concluded: "But, dear brother, I would not have you kill yourself with kindness: for should you *really* be so generous as to retain none but wise men, and

leave all the knaves and fools for me, no one better knows than yourself that I should soon absorb the entire practice of London."

If, then, a state of sickness be preferable to a state of health, then is a state of slavery preferable to a state of freedom. Christianity is responsible for the most irrational and pernicious sophism that ever cursed civilization, — namely, that we are all by nature sinful and depraved; or, as the couplet runs: —

"In Adam's sin
We all jined in."

Its effect is seen in every phase of social history, present and past. The earliest lesson that a child receives is that all men are natural robbers, who, if left to their native ways, will certainly pillage him. Hence he must prepare himself, tooth and nail, for what is called "the great struggle of life." The first Sunday-school lesson teaches him that Adam entailed the curse of sin upon all succeeding generations, until poor Christ was sandwiched in to be the scapegoat of the whole perverse gang. Hence, if nothing be known to the contrary, your neighbor is a villain. Keep a sharp eye on him, or he will plunder you. From this logic come such beautiful Americanisms as "Look out for number one;" "Never trust to appearances;" and others. They even tell us that this is a part of the government of God. Cain was sent out of the presence of the Lord to dwell in the land of Nod, or *Nad*, which signifies a vagabond; for God intended that, because of the sin of Cain, all who henceforth settled in that city should be called vagabonds. A pious historian, in speaking of the city of Nad as the first which was founded in the world, remarks solemnly: "Like all places which are the resort of vagabonds, the city increased rapidly in wealth and population; for nearly all of Adam's children were of that class." So too, if one of our merchants is proven to be a cheat or defaulter, the antagonistic classes declare that all business men are knaves. After the operations of John Law, nearly every man engaged in large operations, however legitimate, was watched like a thief. If a dark mystery occur in connection with Masonry, a grand anti-masonic rage is born, and every Free Mason is for a time a villain. If a vicious Methodist parson commit an outrage on chastity, straightway the more vulgar class of infidels denounce all clergymen as scoundrels and impostors. If a bloody murder occur in England, every Englishman fancies the man at his shoulder to be a murderer. Thomas DeQuincey, in his thrilling story of "Three Notable Murders," says that, after the terrible deed of John Wilson in 1812, England was thrown into a fearful fever of suspicion and fear, and everybody fancied he saw the brand of Cain on his neighbor. "I myself," he says, "was three thousand miles away from London, but there and every-

where the panic was indescribable. My next neighbor, a lady, refused to retire till she had carefully barricaded eighteen doors, and access to her was nearly as difficult as to a feudal baroness of the Middle Ages." "The panic was not confined to the rich; women in the bumblest ranks more than once died on the spot from the shock attending some suspicious intruder, with no worse intent perhaps than simple larceny." So late as 1862, because of a few bold cases of "garroting," the streets of London were nearly deserted at night for weeks after, and representatives of the first respectability of the metropolis were rudely arrested on the strength of some fancied peculiarity of look or manner. In the late trials of spiritualism the same proneness to belief in universal depravity is manifest. Detect some low-bred medium in fraud, or supplement some dexterous feat of legerdemain to explain an alleged spiritual phenomenon, and for purposes of persecution you have made out a case against all the mediums in the world. The cry is everywhere raised: "I told you so! They are all a set of rogues and impostors."

Thus the wicked, blighting doctrine that we are all by nature perverse and depraved has shaped the course of history. If tyrants and meddlers had been simply content to enunciate the proposition, and leave the pursuit of health and salvation to the victims, it would have been comparatively harmless. But this inhuman premise developed a tragic logic, which in its execution has ground and goaded a host of martyrs, and poisoned and choked the native springs of growth and civilization for ages. The plunderers of human liberty on thrones and benches, in pulpits and parlors, have always assumed that, granting you to be sick, they are the anointed and divinely appointed keepers of your health. It is for taking issue with this brazen assumption that political invalids have been dragged into racks and dungeons. It is for questioning this pretended prerogative that men and women are ostracised from respectable society, and branded as licentious anarchists. Reformers, least of all, claim that society is any thing like healthy and perfect. In fact, their very calling arises out of an imperfect state of society. But what they have generally rebelled against is the abortive and poisoning doings of arbitrary practitioners in Church, State, and society. John Hampden did not deny that money was the only tonic that could brace up the rotten constitution of Charles I. What he put his foot upon was the despotic manner of collecting it.

But whether you deny the title of your political doctors, the efficacy of their nostrums, or the wisdom of their methods of administering them, you are equally a rebel and a fanatic, provided they are *constitutionally* created. And what gives this momentous word *constitutional* its awful sanctity? Is one any the more

virtuous because constitutionally a thief? Is one any happier because constitutionally bilious? Was chattel slavery any the less iniquitous because it was constitutional in this country? There is nothing so diabolical in the whole catalogue of human crimes but that it is, or has been at some time, constitutional. The Constitution of a government is but the reflection of the average moral constitution of its framers, and statute laws are simple ramifications from the parent trunk. If our fathers had been Mahometans, we should have been to-day constitutional polygamists; had they been Parsees, we should have been constitutional fire-worshippers; and had they been children of Beelzebub, we should all have been constitutional devils and hell-hounds. Is it not as evident as daylight that constitutions can carry no moral weight *per se;* and what are laws but simply the written opinions of fallible men? The American Constitution of 1788 is the result of the associated wisdom of its framers, with the best helps that were then available. But the best wisdom of 1788 in many departments of thought has become foolishness in 1878. Why should legislative wisdom alone be so immutable? The terms of our Constitution, like all others, rest on their merits. Professor Maine, in his learned work on "Ancient Law," speaking of Thomas Jefferson's "self-evident" truth as embodied in the Declaration of Independence, "All men are born free and equal," says it was simply a "semi-popular" French opinion, which Thomas had imbibed by contact with French infidels and jurists. Among Constitutional lawyers opinions differ widely as to the sanctity and safety of our Constitution. In one of the latest letters of Macaulay, written to Mr. Randall the biographer of Jefferson, he expressed the opinion that against the issues which must yet rise in this country it would prove a useless bulwark. "Your Constitution is all sail, and no anchor," he says. A Constitution has often been but the cunning device of a tyrant to check the progress of opinion among a plundered people. An ancient writer truly says, in reference to the popular assemblies of Athens, that, "if every Athenian were a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would be a mob." That freedom of opinion and criticism which belongs to a true democracy is very dangerous to Constitutions: so pretenders have often found it convenient and safe to compile their own schemes into codes, in order to hide them from the inspection of those whom they had defrauded and plundered. The same trick is played by theologians, who compile their own base interests into creeds, and palm them off on credulous humanity as the laws of God. When I first studied English history at school, I was told by my teacher that, although the Romans conquered the Britons, captured their heroic queen, and treated them with great cruelty, they nevertheless made their plunder good by giving them wise laws and

a taste of their civilization. With great show of equity I was told that, although the Romans were quite famous for that kind of thing, they always healed the ghastly wound of conquest by leaving a good dose of law in the medicine chests of their legions, to be administered constitutionally. I somehow took in the idea that no matter how great the outrage, if it were only done according to the forms of law, it was all right; and I fear that to-day this is the most pitiable form of dupery which is practised upon our American boys. What if Charlemagne *did* pillage and perpetrate the most heart-rending cruelty on the poor Saxons? What if he *did*, with one hand on the cross and the other on the rack, attempt to torture the plundered Saxon princes into Christianity? He left them constitutions and laws, which entitles him to go down into history with the choice few who have been surnamed *the Great*.

But the law-abiding American will say: "Leaving out the sanctity and infallibility of Constitutions, we must have something to anchor to; if everybody were to construe his duty according to his own opinion or bias, we should soon be all afloat; or, as Mr. Macaulay has it, "all sail and no anchor." But, dutiful citizen, will you anchor to words? Ancient Rome and many of the Grecian republics had Constitutions; but they proved no anchor when slavery and vice had fastened upon them. Nowhere in Gibbon's classic *post mortem* of the Roman empire does he ascribe its fall to the want of a firm Constitution. The Romans were the fathers of laws and Constitutions; yet what kind of anchors did they prove when finally the poor they had always with them, and the rich, were steeped in luxury and debauchery? Poland had once a Constitution; but what did it avail her when three royal thieves saw fit, with one stroke of the pen, to wipe out her nationality? It is said that Maria Theresa, in whom some of the instincts of a woman's heart yet remained, wept as she signed that murderous decree; and undoubtedly, truer to her country than to her heart, she wept constitutionally. Prussia, the most intelligent kingdom of Europe to-day, is a so-called constitutional monarchy; yet, for notions of freedom which would be accounted conservative in this country, some of her noblest sons have spent the greater part of their lives in prisons. The Constitution is for the *people*, who vote majesty some four million dollars of pocket-money *per annum*, while in her great, proud capital poor market women may be seen harnessed into wagons with dogs. When the letter of the Constitution does not suit the purposes of royalty, it is easily evaded. The late war with Austria was unpopular with the people. According to the Constitution Bismarck could not raise the money for carrying it on, except by a vote of Parliament. When finally the Parliament refused to vote the supplies, the Premier simply

smiled, borrowed the money of private bankers, led the law-abiding sons of Prussia to slaughter, and charged the bill to the nation. What could the people say, under their dear Constitution, surrounded by a standing army of nearly a million men, every one of whom had virtually sworn to shoot down his own mother, if need be, in obedience to superiors. In the royal University at Berlin, the only place where freedom of speech is tolerated, I heard a learned professor say that Prussia was a constitutional monarchy only in name, but not in the spirit and intent of liberty.

Great Britain is the perfection of a constitutional monarchy; yet the very fact that her Constitution is unwritten proves what has been stated, — that a constitution is a variable product of the average enlightenment of a people. Englishmen will not submit to constitutional injustice any sooner than to any other species. By the Constitution of Great Britain to-day the Queen has an absolute veto over any act of Parliament. Every child knows well enough why it is never exercised. Bismarck and his despotism would soon be stamped beneath English soil without consulting the Constitution. Attempt any flagrant violation of the liberty of the people, and you will soon see what they anchor to. They anchor to justice and the fruits of those great struggles which have cost the lives and liberties of so many of her sons.

And what has England, this prodigy of constitutional law, really done for the average humanity that makes up her population? Many of her sons can recollect when one hundred and fifty-four nabobs sent three hundred and seven members to Parliament, when seats in that body were sold like common merchandise, and when bribery and corruption were everywhere the order of the day. In this law-thriving England, one man out of every ten is a pauper. John Ruskin calls her a nation of thieves. Carlyle despairs. Froude says that thieving and dishonesty seem to increase in a direct ratio with clergymen and law-givers. It really seems as though a nation so rich in constitutional doctors and political medicines ought to have accomplished more for the social and spiritual well-being of her children.

Strange to say, no people cling so superstitiously to their Constitution as do the Americans. When the clanking of the chains of slavery was ringing in the conscience of every humane man in the North, and the insatiable monster threatened to swallow the continent unless exterminated, the cry went up: "The Constitution must and shall be preserved!" Honor might go; humiliation might come; no boon could atone for the sacrifice of the Constitution. Even Charles Sumner, standing between the slave and the auction-block of souls, stickled with pitiable equiv-

ocation for a man-stealing parchment. The few who cried, "The *Right* must and shall be preserved," and *would* be heard, were branded as seditious fanatics. Yet finally the Constitution was swapped off for another humbug, the Union; and Lincoln's proclamation, backed by victorious arms, blotted out one form of American slavery for ever. Now, when the narrow bias of sectional *animus* has ceased, no thoughtful man will for a moment deny that a forced Union is a direct rape on the Constitution, and subversive of its whole spirit and intent; else why did the Government shyly dodge the issue of trying Jefferson Davis for treason? There is not an eminent lawyer in the country who does not know that the denial of the right of a State to secede, under the Constitution, could never stand before the Supreme Court. Again, the various measures for raising money and credit for carrying on the struggle were admitted to be unconstitutional, and only excusable as war measures. Yet, ten years after the war has ceased, the National Banking act, unconstitutional in itself, and a wicked scheme of plunder to fatten bond-holders at the expense of the people, is still fastened upon the honest labor and industry of the country with double security. Such is our vaunted Constitution, which was preserved by so terrible a sacrifice of blood and treasure, and in the centennial year of our nation rewards you by lacking strength enough to elect a chief magistrate of its subjects.

But, allowing all that is claimed for it, we now come to the vital question at issue, as it affects freedom. By what right do you presume to force that Constitution upon me? Granting it to be a safe and satisfying anchorage for you, why should I be compelled to adopt it? I have never signed it; I had no voice in its making; I may never have read it, — yet I am bound to it by the penalties of treason. If you and I go fishing in separate boats, or if we become "fishers of men" in separate bodies, you may anchor where you choose. If you are on good ground, and catch all the big fish, well and good. But as soon as you attempt to compel me to anchor on the same ground, I say: "Let me alone! I am satisfied where I am; the tide may turn by and by; but, whether it does or not, I deny your right to coerce me; I can paddle my own canoe." But your agents, the sheriffs and judges and policemen, say: "No; you have no right to cast anchor on any save constitutional ground. Your assumption that you have a right to catch fish as you will, and where you will, at your own cost, is treasonable. We have staked off a certain portion of God's earth and water for you to fish in, and, unless you obey without many words, we will 'haul you up' for repairs." Now my masters, in these arbitrary proceedings, assume a very grave responsibility. If I submit, they ought, in all reason and justice, to render strict account to me for such direct invasion of

my personal liberty. But who ever apologized to you for saddling a Constitution upon you which was made before you were born? Who ever asked you to read the document, and say whether you were willing to subscribe to it? Did the men who made it ask any one to subscribe to it, except those who were then willing to? The State of Rhode Island, in which I live, refused to take part in making that document. They did not want it. Finally, two men who did not represent the State or its wishes reluctantly signed it at the eleventh hour. Why should I, then, nearly a century afterwards, be bound by it? Some may think this a foolish question; but we are now dealing with essential right, and not with conditional and artificial right. It was thought a foolish question when the colonists asked: "Why should we be taxed without our consent?" and Dr. Samuel Johnson, the oracle of his time, wrote a learned pamphlet to prove that taxation without representation was no tyranny. When my parents used to coerce me, they generally had the humanity to explain why I ought to obey. They knew that, if I did not obey in spirit, I did not obey at all; hence, if not always on the right end of a thrashing, the moral and conventional grounds of their right to compel were explained. But I do not recollect that they ever cited any of the household regulations of my great-grandfather as binding upon me. Henry Ward Beecher once forcibly illustrated the ridiculousness of shaping one's religious life by a printed liturgy by comparing it to a young man who should attempt to woo his beloved by reading to her his grandmother's love-letters. The very fact of the antiquity of a code, which is the greatest argument against its title to bind the present generation, seems to make it all the more plausible with most of us. On the Continent of Europe jurists boast of tracing their laws far back into Roman society, and speak slightingly of the English Common Law, which often can trace its pedigree no farther back than to some bloody Norman pirate. So we speak of the sacred Constitution of our fathers just as though they were less liable to err than the same number of men who might be brought together to-day. But (to their credit be it said) they never even left the request on record that we should be bound by their arrangement, while we, after nearly a century of progress, retain a chronic fear of reformers and new ideas, slinking back at every crisis behind their continental wigs and lappels.

But my republican neighbors will reply: "You misrepresent: there are ample provisions for amending the Constitution to suit the requirements of modern progress." And here we shall be forced back one step farther towards the main issue, and have to ask: Yet, after all, what right have you to force the Constitution on me, as amended, provided I have no voice in amending it? You have not answered the main question at all. I

admit it was not the gracious gift of an individual tyrant. It was the gift of a tyrant more invulnerable than any one man. It was the legacy of the collective tyrant, Majority. If his Royal Highness, Majority, choose to amend the instrument, I, the plundered victim, Minority, am none the better off. I still hurl back the original question at your throne: Who gave you the divine right to make me your slave? Despotism is despotism; by changing the name of the despot you do not change the essential act. I still insist on holding you to the previous question. Show me your title in equity. That title has never been shown, nor do writers on State polity pretend that it would have any validity in justice if one were hatched up. They simply start on the assumption that despotism must in the nature of things exist. When the whole odium is concentrated upon one man, he is a target for all the victims, and may fall; therefore, if you divide the outrage among a great number, no individual can easily be seized upon as responsible, and your despotism will stand. A gentleman was recently explaining the equitable arrangement for counting the electoral votes by this same sublime logic. "You see," he says, "that, if any one man should count Hayes in under the circumstances, it would no doubt be arbitrary; the responsibility would be too great, and the people would not stand it. Now, by dividing the responsibility, and so balloting that no one will know by whose vote he is elected, Hayes may be counted in equitably, and everybody will be satisfied." Is that not prodigious reasoning? After admitting that Hayes was not even the choice of a majority of the people, — that, if one man should count him in, it would be arbitrary and unjust, — my friend, with marvellous hardihood, goes on to say in substance that, if you can only hide that same man in the crowd, the *same act* becomes just and equitable. By this logic, the thief who takes your pocket-book is not a thief, if he can only disguise himself in a crowd. Yet our boasted institutions rest on no better basis than this. A majority can constitutionally enforce the enactments of Charles I. on the minority, — in fact, some of them are actually on the statute-book to-day. When that is done, is the majority any better than he? According to my friend's logic, the majority is a just ruler because you cannot cut its head off. To those who would ask the vulgar question: "Would you then go back to Rousseau's state of Nature and anarchy?" I answer: No! I would go forward to a state of justice and individual dignity. It is not even necessary to deny Mr. Emerson's proposition that society is always as near perfection as is compatible with the conditions. Where we stand on dangerous ground is in taking for granted the essential virtue of political assumptions, simply because our institutions happen to be built upon them. What is true in theory will yet be boiled

down to practice, if so-called fanatics only keep stirring up the pot. The great danger to republicans is that shallow conceit which imagines that we are now on the "home stretch" for the millennium, if we can only frighten off the galling whips of incendiary reformers.

John Stuart Mill, in his "Essay on Liberty," says: "Let us suppose that the Government is entirely at one with the people, and never thinks of exercising any power of coercion, unless in agreement with what it conceives to be their voice. But I deny the right of the people to exercise such coercion, either by themselves or by their Government. The power itself is illegitimate. The best Government has no more title to it than the worst. It is as noxious, or more noxious, when exerted in accordance with public opinion than when in opposition to it. If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind." Very good, Mr. Mill; let us try your rule, and see how long we can keep out of prison. I hold, for instance, the solemn conviction that the Legislature of Massachusetts has no authority over me; that I am my own natural keeper; and that to submit to its taxes and domination is a violation of my conscience. Moreover, I hold the still more sacred opinion that a man ought to live up to his convictions. Suppose I should go upon Boston Common, herald my opinion to a large audience, and attempt by all possible means to win converts. How long before a very insignificant portion of mankind would seize me by the collar and silence me? My freedom of expression, then, goes just as far as society is disposed to let it. If it be a harmless, abstract notion, with a weak power behind it, let it go; but as soon as I hold a law of the State to be stupid and arbitrary, and in all consistency advise my neighbors, with myself, not to obey it, then it becomes treasonable, and the prison-door stands open to silence me. Sitting in a large beer-house in Germany, amidst the clatter of a thousand voices, a citizen, having occasion to pass some sharp criticism on the Government, whispered carefully in my ear, with an anxious lookout for informers. "Do you not enjoy liberty of speech in this country?" I said. "Oh, yes!" was the reply; "the Constitution grants to every man freedom of speech; only, when one criticises the Government loudly, he must do it in his own apartments, and not publicly." That is delicious freedom. One has perfect liberty to express his opinions of his rulers, with the gracious qualification that he must do it where nobody can hear him. Our own vaunted "free speech" is only a modification of the same principle.

Blackstone, in his "Commentaries" (1806), says that "among

the variety of actions which men are liable daily to commit in England, no less than one hundred and sixty are declared by act of Parliament to be felonies, without benefit of clergy; or, in other words, to be worthy of instant death." Such were hunting in the night disguised, pulling down turnpike gates, refusing to leave a meeting at the order of a magistrate, marrying a couple outside of a church without the license of the Archbishop of Canterbury, stealing from the person above one shilling, or from a house above five shillings, and enough other comparatively trivial acts to fill a chapter. For these grave crimes a person might be dragged to the place of execution at the heels of horses, embowelled alive, burnt to death, beheaded, quartered, or have his cheek or hands branded before execution. As late as the reign of William IV., in capital cases counsel for the accused were not allowed to plead for a criminal, further than to state points of law to the Court. While such a Penal Code would disgrace the Fiji Islands, it remained the law, with slight modifications, till the reign of George IV.; and much of it is law to this day. Yet the classical Blackstone was never tired of eulogizing this brutal code; while Paley, the arch-deacon, could congratulate the readers of his "Moral Philosophy" that torture to extort confessions had been excluded from what he called "the mild and cautious system of penal jurisprudence established in this country." In 1809 Sir Samuel Romilly proposed two bills in Parliament, repealing the laws making it capital to steal to the value of above five shillings from a shop, or forty from a dwelling-house. Both bills failed, and the excitement caused by this attempt to narrow the province of the scaffold is almost incredible. He was pounced upon without mercy by all classes, from the Chancellor in his robes to the vulgar pamphleteer in Grub Street, and barely escaped the prison walls himself. What would have become of him had he questioned the authority of the authors of this sanguinary code, although some of them had died a thousand years before? Your theory is extremely gracious, Mr. Mill; but what does it avail when one seeks to put it into deeds?

That Government derives its powers from brute force is as plain as a primer lesson. It may tickle the American ear to hear on the Fourth of July that "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," but in practice it is a silly satire on common sense. What Government was ever organized on this principle? If any man be so shallow as to suppose ours is, let him pause a moment. We will suppose there are, in round numbers, four million voters in this country. Two million of these voters, plus one, are determined on a set of men and measures which mean ruin and disgust to the remaining two million, minus one. What does this mean in practice?

It means as plainly as any thing can that a Government created by one man can rule two million, less one, without appeal, for four years, although they may hate their rulers and their rule as they would a coil of snakes. The Republicans, in smuggling Hayes into the Presidential chair by one electoral vote, cause more than two millions of people to be governed for the next four years by a forced consent, which is no consent at all; and that by the power of one man. What is Jefferson's high sounding maxim good for, then, except to cheat school-boys? If the authors of the Declaration of Independence had waited for their powers till they had received the consent of the governed, this nation would never have been born.

Our fathers inaugurated their specious farce of "free government" with pompous platitudes. But their first act was to rob one-half of the people of the right of representation. It is not necessary here to review in detail the arguments for woman's suffrage. The utter injustice of restricting the right of voting to the whiskered lords of creation is next to self-evident, and one day it will be found in the historian's fossil cabinet of extinct barbarisms. In 1873 I spent several months in one of the most intelligent towns of the South. On account of its healthy location it was the residence of many cultivated and refined people. The Mayor of this place (of some two thousand inhabitants) was a rude negro, who held his office by virtue of the number of black votes he could control in the county. He handled all the taxes, could send people, right and left, to the penitentiary for ordinary penal offences, and had discretion in cases of equity involving not more than twenty thousand dollars. He could not read, and the utmost stretch of his scholarship was to write his name, which he did with great ostentation. I have seen a cultivated southern lawyer, who had once been Attorney General of the State of Mississippi, and was educated in Yale College, plead and pile up the law before him, while he sat in his magisterial robe of red flannel with his feet on the table. This Ethiopian magnate could vote, and create votes; but the grieving widows of fallen Southrons, who were being taxed unto desperation and robbed of the little that remained to them to fatten a gang of thieving carpet-baggers, could not approach the ballot-box. This is the "consent of the governed" with a vengeance. Yet gentlemen of culture in New England who clamored to extend the suffrage to this burly fellow, and would not refuse it to a Bleecker Street bully in New York, will deny it to their own mothers and sisters, though they may be taxed tenfold more than the entire ring of ward politicians who are spending their money. Do not wait, then, till the Fourth of July for an application of "taxation without representation." It is unblushingly practised every day, and on every household. I will admit that the most

humiliating feature of the business is the fact that the victimized parties — the women themselves — are those least alive to the injustice of this outrage; but this is no better argument for it than the fact that the southern slave was less keenly alive to his condition than were Sumner and Phillips. Woman inherits the stultifying incubus of thousands of years of Heathen and Christian education, which has taught her to bow submissively to the divine prerogative of *he*-ism. The right of suffrage, although it does not go to the root of the matter, is one step towards saving the soul which some religions refuse to credit her with, and rescuing her from the lusts and usurpations of men to be mistress of herself.

So, then, we find that two million men, plus one, by their votes, can organize a government which shall control the remaining thirty-eight millions of people, who either have had no voice at all, or by their express votes are directly opposed to it. One would naturally suppose that the representatives of the will of these two millions, plus one, would have immense deference for the two millions, minus one, who voted against them. In practice, they are, however, as far as the majority can have it, entirely unrepresented. Stuart Mill says that a pure Democracy is a government in which the will of every individual is felt, and that the perfection of a representative government may be measured by its approach to this condition. It is doubtful whether one-tenth of American voters know what minority representation means. This question was discussed in a public hall before a very intelligent audience, — on the one side by an able member of the Rhode Island bar, and on the other by a well-known physician; and, although conducted with great spirit, the auditors hardly cared enough about it to keep awake. What does the average American care about minority representation? He simply has a vague idea that we have reached that glorious point of civilization where the majority rules, and he cares little for so abstract a chimera as that the minority should receive their quantum of representation, if the principles of the Declaration of Independence be any thing more than empty bombast. Chapters could be quoted from the writings of Burke, Mill, Guizot, and Calhoun, showing that a majority, if it mean no more than mere numbers, is the worst and most hateful species of despotism conceivable. No American statesman would have the hardihood to maintain that a majority, by mere force of numbers, is preferable to any other despot. Calhoun employed his latest hours and most elaborate efforts on a work designed as a warning against the dangers of that absolutism which would result from committing the destinies of the country to the uncontrolled government of a numerical majority. Politicians, when questioned as to their just title to power, will cunningly maintain that in this

country the minority *is* represented through the complex nature of our representative bodies, although they know better.

But if the two millions of votes, plus one, really represented a solid and sincere constituency of earnest men, the remainder might be called upon with some show of justice to submit in patience till the principles to which they were devoted had had a fair trial. What is the fact? An unscrupulous gang of bondholders, stock-operators, and political leeches convenes at Cincinnati or St. Louis, conceals its schemes of plunder beneath a specious platform, and nominates as its executors men who will best serve its purposes. So far from the nominees being the preconceived choice of a party, the people have no idea of their being nominated till the telegraph suddenly announces it. The office holders are in a fever of anxiety; while a crowd of voters stand around the bulletins, bandying the kind of slang remarks that are heard from a party watching a faro-bank in a gambling saloon. Where is the voice of the people? It is the voice of the Shylocks and railroad kings and political gamesters. Here, then, is your "consent of the governed." In the last analysis it is the forced acquiescence of a tax-ridden, over-governed people under the forms of a sham Constitution. Your imposing popular majority is easily sifted down to a small knot of scheming boss-jobbers. Men, right and left, are free to admit it. This is no hasty crimination. Everybody knows it. These cunning plunderers and their auxiliaries own the press and the pulpit. When death, the only power which they cannot control, overtakes them, their own corrupt organs eulogize them; the pulpit chimes in, and tickets them through to heaven. Legislatures which they have often bought up adjourn; universities which are shameless enough to receive their stolen property close their doors; and their gibes and jobs are handed over to their children. During the late campaign, in a torch-light procession, I saw a squad of brawny day-laborers carrying a transparency with the words: "We want a government *of* the people, *by* the people, and *for* the people." As the stirring music of the band resounded from the great mercantile magazines of wealth, there was something touching in the scene. Poor trudging dupes! you want a government for the people, while the agent of a foreign bond-holding Jew in St. Louis, with his hand on the telegraph, is using you to lay the pipes which shall suck up your hard earnings for generations, and doom you and your children's children to poverty and brutal toil.

Behold, then, your real rulers! This is the stuff that bloats itself into majorities. These are the men who tell us we are sick, and must be put under their treatment, whether we will or not. The legislatures are their doctors' councils; the governors and sheriffs and judges and police are their active practitioners; the

prisons and work-houses are their hospitals. Their only title is force. Their right is intrenched in might, and the secret of their might is the ignorance and stupidity of their patients. Guizot truly says that there can be but two titles to government, — consent or force. I need not ask you how small a fraction of the American people will submit to the swindle of these four years by real consent. Acquiescence is not consent. It is a convenient term for the victims of force, when they cannot, or will not, help themselves.

There is no great error in politics that does not necessarily affect every department of social life. In measuring the baneful effects of majority rule simply by its influence on political life, its magnitude is but faintly seen. There is a tribunal, not indeed created by ballots, yet vastly more far-reaching and terrible than "official returns," which is known as "Public Opinion." This monster offspring of the majority force in elections is the omnipresent nightmare of "respectable" citizens. Rather than be branded with its unwritten verdict, "unpopular," men and women will stultify their souls, sell their bodies into slavery, and bury their consciences. With the fear of this hideous scare before their eyes, the tongues of clergymen are cankered with lies. Under the terrors of its sceptre men will sneak into the privacy of their closets to whisper to a confiding friend opinions "too valuable for the world." Women, rather than incur one frown from this phantom god, will pine and starve and weep and waste in solitude, sell themselves into legalized prostitution, or mouse around, in demoralizing stealth, to obtain Heaven's freest gift. Under the tyranny of ballots you are not left entirely without hope. The figure-heads change from time to time; there is some variety, not a little fun, and a slight prospect of ultimate relief. But, under this latter despotism, there is no mercy and no appeal. Popular Majority may elect a Grant. Though you understand the swindle you are taxed to support, there is some relief in the thought that the corrupt stables will soon be aired and swept and smoked out for a new occupant. But, when popular opinion sets up a Grundy, it has fastened an absolute monarch upon society as undethronable as a Sphynx. Her reign has no constitutional limits. Her mandates are supreme. The waggle of her gossiping tongue is more potent than the sceptre of the Cæsars. The rustle of her petticoats is more momentous than the cackle of Juno's geese. Her throne is all the more firm from being planted in the imagination. Her frowns are all the more terrible from being masked in nebulous mystery. Her sword is all the more dreadful from being wielded in the dark. Like all successful powers of darkness, she is mighty because unseen, and lives perpetual because intangible.

England and America, the strongholds of majority rule, afford

the most humiliating spectacle of servile conformity to the dictation of custom to be found in modern society. The history of human progress is essentially the history of non-conformity. But when men renounce conformity to the practices of Monarchy and lend the same allegiance to Majority, they simply exchange one tyrant for another. In spirit their condition remains the same. When Protestants renounced conformity to Popery, they immediately saddled upon themselves the Bible, — only a new name for what was in spirit the same despotism. The spirit of free inquiry which crept in was the only element which gave this great turning-point of modern civilization any just title to be called the Reformation. When will men learn that it is the spirit of an act, rather than the name, which determines its virtue? If the testimony of such observers as Thackeray, Mill, and Herbert Spencer may be trusted, the spirit of conformity is more zealous now than in the Middle Ages. Edward II. prescribed by statute what should be the dress of every rank, profession, and trade in England under severe penalties. Now Fashion does it, under penalties scarcely less dreadful to those who would be respectable. What is the difference? A penalty which you create by your own foolishness is as merciless as a penalty of the Tudors, and often more unreasonable. The habit of compromising one's convictions with the modern supreme ruler, Popularity, has developed and fattened that most hateful monster of our times, Hypocrisy. John Morley, in his essay on "Compromise," says that hypocrisy has become so universal in England that even eminent prelates do not blush to extenuate it on grounds of expediency. Public Opinion has become so powerful a rival of Conscience that a man's inner convictions are not supposed to have any necessary connection with his profession. Offices in the Church, which were supposed once to carry something of sacredness with them, are looked upon now as bargains men have struck between their inner feelings and Mammon. The most successful pulpits are Punch and Judy shows. One hears quite frequently great surprise expressed that Barnum does not take the hint, seeing how the Moody and Sankey business draws; and the suspicion has even got as far as the papers that these two religious mountebanks are in the employ of some western showman who keeps in the dark. Hypocrisy has become so common in this country in high places that holy things excite scarcely more than a shrewd grin from the classes who read and observe. It has finally become so brazen that it begins to defend itself on grounds of expediency, and is really in a fair way to become itself "popular." This is no exaggeration. Herbert Spencer, in his essay on "Manners and Fashion," traces the lamentable slavery of Englishmen to Custom to its only source, Government. With logical certainty, you can measure the progress of a peo-

ple in self-government by the spirit of non-conformity to conventionalities which is discoverable in individuals. By this standard whence comes the mountain of hypocrisy, time-serving, double-dealing, and soul-selling, which assumes more astonishing proportions in England and the United States than in any other countries in the world? Does it not arise from a blind, unquestioning submission to the despotism of majorities which, carried into social life, prompts a man to forsake his conscience, reason, and conviction, in deference to what may chance to be popular?

Out of this condition of things has been developed a political dogma, scarcely less pernicious than the dogma of total depravity in theology. It is that the individual is of no account against the tendencies and objects of society. Guizot, in his "History of Civilization," says that "the last and grandest problem to which the history of civilization can lead us is whether society is formed for the individual, or the individual for society." He admits that he has not the courage to answer this question, though it still haunts him at the end of his lectures. It is naturally the underlying question in the philosophy of society, and on its decision depends the ultimate progress or decline of the race. Guizot, although not satisfied with himself, prefers to remain "on the fence," and asserts that the two principles are mutual in their results to civilization. Most builders of States have found it safest to adopt this conservative polity. The founders of this government adopted it, and were careful that no line of the Constitution should ignore individual sovereignty in the sisterhood of United States. The problem given to the framers of the Constitution was substantially: Draft an equitable compromise between the rights of States as individuals and the interests of society as a whole, with the strict condition that the sovereignty of an individual State shall never be invaded in deference to society at large. Our fathers kept this last main term ever in view, and solved the problem with acknowledged ability and honesty. As the delegates from each State signed the national parchment, they cast a hesitating glance at its chief condition. Rhode Island, being an insignificant individual in point of size, was so tenacious of her sovereignty that she refused to take part in the convention, and could not be persuaded, till the last moment, to join the Union, lest she might thereby commit the fatal mistake of signing away her individuality. What has become of this cardinal principle of the original compact? It was ravished and wiped out in the late War of the Rebellion. At Appomattox was virtually surrendered the vital safeguard that first made the Union possible. Since then, the principle of centralization has stealthily insinuated itself into public sanction, and the dominant administration has carried it into practice as fast as the people would bear. This last act of treason to the

Constitution has been covered by specious pretexts; but, taken in all its bearings, it is a more murderous rebellion against the spirit and intent of our government than was ever concocted by slave-holding conspirators. For, if we bear in mind — what most political writers concede — that the problem of the individual is the problem of the race, we must give the fathers credit for great wisdom in recognizing it in their Constitution; and since, as has been said, the political model becomes the guide in social life, it was a perpetual incentive to aspiration in the individual member of society, on whose elevation and emancipation the salvation of humanity hangs. To stamp out and bury this beautiful germ seems to have been the purpose of the corrupt vandals, headed by Grant, who managed the Ship of State for eight years. But the high destiny of the individual is too evident a part of the plan of Nature to be thwarted by such moral pigmies. The last act in the drama of human perfection will go on, till artificial governments shall put aside their trumpery to make room for the development of individual manhood and womanhood.

Government is an organized conspiracy against the individual. It differs from other conspiracies mainly in point of numbers and respectability. Successful conspiracies make heroes and patriots; unsuccessful make traitors and outlaws. For ages, the individual, in government, was yet unborn. In the Athenian State, — the nearest approach to recognizing him in ancient times, — the figures stand thus: —

Adult *male* free citizens, *who alone could exercise political franchises*,	21,000
Free women and children	63,000
Slaves	400,000

In more modern civilizations the individual has been able to make himself felt only by organizing into legislative units. The Great Charter which the Norman barons secured from King John "by the grace of God," in 1215, was the first effort of this kind in later times. It established the provision, which Mr. Hallam calls "the keystone of English liberty," that no freeman should be convicted and punished, "unless by legal consent of his peers." Representative governments, with responsible ministries and the various agitations for parliamentary reform, were all movements of the individual to get out of the quagmire of despotism upon a footing where he might wage a fair fight for liberty. It would be ungenerous to say that he does not stand on better ground in this country than in any other. But what is conceded to him is through sufferance rather than from justice. Society has not yet been educated to a sense of his worth. The pyramid is inverted, and we are educated to believe that he is of no account against the majority conspirators who insist on doctoring him without his consent.

We hardly get our eyes open in this life before we discover that somebody stands ready to govern us. As soon as we can walk, the corps of governors is increased by the addition of Sunday-School teachers, school masters, and clergymen. Once old enough to be responsible, the judges, legislators, and police step in for a share, and the whole bevy is finally reinforced by the "government of God." We, in turn, retaliate by governing our brothers, sisters, relatives, and friends. Then we look about for a wife, and try to govern her; and if we are fortunate enough to have children, we repeat our whole experience on them. In short, nine-tenths of existence is spent in governing and being governed. All this time we studiously forget to govern ourselves. In fact, the whole tenor of our education makes us believe that we have no right to govern ourselves; that is the business of somebody outside of ourselves. The stirring American citizen is entirely out of a job as soon as he has nobody to govern, and immediately sets to work to find somebody. The first article of his political creed is that we are all by nature sick, and must be doctored; hence his chief care is to erect costly doctor-shops for dispensing governmental remedies. His proudest prerogative is to nominate and vote for the doctors who are to officiate, and to see that they are properly honored and remunerated.

All this is very well for those who are determined to be sick, wish to be doctored, and are willing to pay for it, by such methods. But what becomes of the individual who does not want to be sick, and who, when he *is* sick, chooses to doctor himself at his own risk and cost? Provided he disturb no one else, what right has society to drag him into its arrangements? It has no right, — and no title but force. Mr. Froude, the historian, is the only man of prominence at the present day who is consistent on this subject. When in this country, being called upon to show by what title England governed (or rather misgoverned) Ireland, he faced the issue squarely, admitted that the only title was *might*, and shaped his political ethics accordingly. Twist and whitewash the moral philosophy of politics as you will, an honest man can arrive at but one result, — might is right. You may call government "a mutual compact," "a compromise for the general good," or give it any specious title you will, the moment you bind a person to it without his or her consent it is an organized robber.

It is hardly worth while to answer the kind of questions that are often thrust forward by thoughtless persons, such as: "Would you do away with all government?" "Would you banish all law?" "Would you go back to anarchy?" and others of that stamp. No man can escape government and law. In fact, government and law are the very conditions that make existence possible. But there is a vast difference between the laws of Nature and the

conventional tinkerings of men. *The best government that ever existed is at war with Nature, in so far as it interferes with the natural right of individuals to make their own contracts in trade, love, and culture, at their own expense.*

Neither would any sane man deny that human governments are necessary. But *necessary* and *right* are by no means identical terms. Society admits that there are necessary evils. Government is one of them. We may submit with the best grace we can command, but we should never forget that it is a tyrant. When I chain up my dog, he caresses the hand that enslaves him. I do not propose to do so with government. Every man and woman should be zealous to kick off the fetters on personal liberty as fast as possible, rather than help forge new ones. The individual should never forget that the end and aim of all honest government is finally to secure his sovereignty. If he submits to the necessities of the hour, he does double violence to himself when he makes a god out of what his masters admit to be a necessary evil. O. B. Frothingham said a very pretty thing in one of his sermons: "The main duty of the church is to teach its members how to get along without it." So the chief impulse of artificial governments should be to keep their meddlesome decrees down to the lowest possible number, having constantly in view the earliest practicable time when they shall become unnecessary. Government should rest on three main pillars: first, the inviolability of life; second, the inviolability of one's honest possession (not *property*, as now understood); third, the inviolability of all liberty which does not undermine the first two. The triumph of reformers will be secured first around the first pillar; for war, legal murder, and brutality are gradually fading out of favor in the softening rays of modern refinement. Around the second, the fight is now culminating with ominous rapidity. Government, not satisfied merely to define "honest possession" by its barbarous term "property," stands ready to defend it against outraged Labor with its police and bayonets. The struggle must come; the war is inevitable; but, at whatever cost, the right will come uppermost, and justice shall be done.

Around the last pillar, the contest will be longest and most persistent; for government assumes to put that kind of construction as to what is destructive to life and property, which suits the "genius of society." The reformer maintains that his theories, if rightly analyzed and put into practice, are the real conservators of property. The judge dissents, and charges that the agitator should be gagged, since such doctrines tend to anarchy, — that is, unsettle property. If the reformer still maintain that his opinion is just as sacred to him as is that of the judge, the latter will contemptuously admit that, for aught he knows, the opinion is a sounder one and more sacred, but —

What!—"*My opinion is backed by prisons and artillery; help yourself if you can!*"

Choked off by this last "argument," the reformer tries his head and heart at social and moral doctrines. But here again he finds that his opinions as to morality do not square with those of the judge. By the late congressional gag law, the judge need not waste his time in weighing opinions with his victim. He charges the jury that, whatever be the character of the pamphleteer, or however noble and conscientious the motive, if its moral creed should be found not to coincide with established notions, they are bound to treat him to the opportunity of sending the moral reform rival to prison. In the matter of free contracts which violate neither life nor property, and are executed solely at the cost of the contracting parties, the judge thrusts himself forcibly between the parties, and insolently affirms that there can be no contracts where he is not recognized as an interested party.

So the old tragedy of human despotism goes on under modernized forms: on the one side, Government backed by brute force; on the other, Conscience backed by the silent machinery of the moral universe. More martyrs are yet to come; but let not radicals despair. After all, how insignificant the pigmy pensioners of an hour of authority as against the soul's indwelling promise of infinite perfectibility in a limitless future. Nature reversed the verdicts of all tyrants before the first was born. History soon makes their brow-beaten victims their judges, and they are forgotten. Can we not afford to wait?

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